

Auchinairn Early Learning Centre



Lone Working Policy

Purpose

We are committed to always ensuring the safety and wellbeing of children and staff.

This policy outlines how lone working is managed safely within our setting, recognising that while it is not standard practice, there may be short periods where staff are temporarily working alone.

Policy Statement

In line with Care Inspectorate expectations and Getting it Right for Every Child, we:

- Prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children and staff
- Minimise lone working wherever possible
- Ensure effective communication systems are in place
- Maintain appropriate supervision and ratios
- Support staff to feel safe, confident and supported
- Lone working is only permitted for short, necessary periods and is carefully managed.

In Auchinairn EYC, all staff are SSSC registered and hold a valid PVG. Lone working may, at times, take place in the nurture room. Head of Centre office, community centre rooms, or during toileting and intimate care routines.

Definition of Lone Working

Lone working may occur when:

A staff member is temporarily the only adult in a playroom or area

Staff are working in different areas of the building

Staff are supporting children during routine transitions

We recognise that:

- Lone working may be physical (separate rooms) but not isolated
- Staff may still be supported through communication systems

Our Approach to Lone Working

We aim to avoid lone working wherever possible. However, we recognise it may occur briefly during:

- Staff toilet breaks
- Tea/lunch breaks
- Short transitions within the setting

Lone working is:

- Planned where possible
- Time-limited
- Risk assessed
- Supported by communication systems

Maintaining Ratios & Supervision

We always maintain overall staff-to-child ratios across the setting. At times, ratios may be maintained across the building rather than per individual room. Staff ensure children remain supervised, safe and supported always. No staff member will be left in a situation where they cannot safely meet children's needs.

Communication Systems

Strong communication is essential.

Our setting uses:

- Individual walkie-talkies for all staff
- Clear communication expectations
- Immediate response procedures

Staff are expected to:

- Always remain contactable
- Communicate clearly when leaving or entering areas
- Request support immediately if required

Environment & Layout

Our centre has been designed to support safety:

- Limited blind spots
- Open, visible spaces
- Easy access between rooms
- Clear lines of sight

This ensures that:

- Staff are rarely fully isolated
- Support can be accessed quickly
- Children remain visible and supervised

Dynamic Risk Assessment

Staff are expected to carry out ongoing, dynamic (verbal) risk assessments to ensure that lone working is safe and appropriate at any given time.

This includes considering:

- The number of children present
- Children's age and stage of development
- The needs of children, including those with Additional Support Needs (ASN)
- Children requiring higher levels of supervision or emotional support
- The environment and activity being undertaken
- Any factors that may impact safety, wellbeing or supervision

Staff will:

- Communicate with colleagues to agree whether lone working is appropriate
- Use professional judgement supported by experience and training
- Prioritise safety at all times

If staff determine that lone working is not appropriate, they must:

- Immediately seek support
- Inform the Head of Centre, Depute Head of Centre, or delegated staff responsible for deployment
- Adjust staffing arrangements to ensure safe supervision

All decisions to decline or adjust lone working are recognised as positive safeguarding practice, and staff will always be supported in prioritising children's safety and wellbeing. Lone working arrangements will never compromise safeguarding responsibilities or the wellbeing of children.

Staff Responsibilities

Staff will:

- Follow all lone working procedures
- Always maintain communication
- Be aware of their environment
- Report concerns immediately
- Ensure children remain safe and supervised

Staff should never:

- Place themselves or children at risk
- Ignore communication procedures
- Continue lone working if they feel unsafe

Leadership Responsibilities

Leadership will:

- Ensure safe staffing levels
- Monitor lone working practices
- Provide training and guidance
- Respond to concerns promptly
- Review risk assessments regularly

Situations Where Lone Working is Not Appropriate

Lone working must not take place in higher-risk situations, including:

- When managing challenging or high-risk behaviour, distressed or dysregulated where agreed strategies are no longer supportive
- When children require enhanced supervision or individualised support
- In areas where visibility or communication is reduced

In these situations, additional staff support must always be in place.

Lone Working During Personal/Intimate Care

Lone working may occur during toileting, changing clothes, or personal care tasks.

Staff are always in close proximity to children to provide support and maintain supervision.

Children's dignity, privacy, and protection remain the highest priority. Doors may be left slightly ajar to ensure safety, while maintaining as much privacy as possible.

Supporting Staff Wellbeing

We recognise that lone working can feel isolating or stressful.

We support staff by:

- Encouraging open communication
- Promoting teamwork and collaboration
- Providing reassurance and guidance
- Ensuring lone working is minimal and supported

Responding to Incidents

In the event of an incident:

- Staff will use communication devices immediately
- Support will be provided without delay
- Incident will be recorded and reviewed
- Practice will be adapted if required

Staff Training & Induction

All staff will:

- Receive guidance on lone working during induction
- Understand expectations around supervision, communication and safeguarding
- Be supported through ongoing training, supervision and reflective practice

This ensures staff feel confident in making safe, informed decisions.

Best Practice & Research

This policy reflects best practice guidance, recognising that:

- Lone working should be avoided or minimised in early years settings
- Strong communication systems significantly reduce risk
- Environmental design plays a key role in safety
- Staff confidence and training are essential

Guidance from Health and Safety Executive highlights the importance of:

- Risk assessment
- Communication
- Supervision
- Staff training

This policy links to:

Child Protection Policy

Health & Safety Policy

Supervision Policy

Staff Code of Conduct

Risk Assessment Policy

This policy is supported by national legislation:

National Guidance for Child Protection in Scotland 2021

Quality Framework for Daycare of Children: Staff staffing arrangements

Health and safety at work act 1974

Scottish Social Services Council Codes of Practice

UNCRC

This policy has been updated after consultation with staff and parent/carer

Signed.....

April 2026